DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 367 592 SP 034 951

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TITLE Teachers' Opinions of the Security and Safety Climate in Chicago Public Schools at Cabrini-Green.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 21p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Crime Prevention; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Teachers; Inner City; Police School Relationship; Public Schools; Questionnaires; *School Safety; *School Security; Security Personnel; *Teacher Attitudes; Victims of Crime; Violence
IDENTIFIERS *Chicago Public Schools IL

ABSTRACT

Chicago public elementary school students and teachers report a growing number of crimes and violent incidents on school property. This paper, which includes a lengthy literature review (14 pages), describes a study conducted to examine the opinions of one group of teachers regarding the safety and security climate in the school where they teach. A questionnaire entitled "Teachers' Safety and Security Perception in the Chicago Public Schools at Cabrini-Green" referred to as the "TSSP" was developed and administered to elementary school teachers (N=40) working in Cabrini-Green, a low-income high-rise Chicago Housing Authority project known for high statistics in violence and crime. The teachers were employed at the Sojourner Truth elementary school with a population of about 600 students. According to the data analysis, 94 percent of the sample feel safe in the school (it should be noted that participants work in a school with a full-time security staff); 53 percent have been victims of crime at school; and 58 percent report an increase in school security in the last 5 years. It is further indicated that more crimes take place in schools than are reported by teachers to either administrators or police. Since the majority of teachers have been victims of school-related crime, it is recommended that more dialogue take place with law enforcement officials and schools administrators to help make public schools safer. The paper includes a table of the responses to the TSSP. (LL)

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TEACHERS OPINIONS OF THE SECURITY AND SAFETY CLIMATE IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS AT CABRINI-GREEN

DAVID LEE SPEARMAN

According to the President of the United States in a speech given in Memphis, Tennessee on Saturday, November 13, 1993:

> At an earlier and earlier age, you have children who are harder and harder(emotionally) ...(Tribune Correspondents, 1993, p. 6, sec. 1).

Because of that, some teachers are placed in life threatening situations as they attempt to instruct, inform, enlighten, discipline, and train the next generation of society in American public schools. Within the last few years, more incidents of school-related crime and violence have been reported to law enforcement agencies and school authorities. Recently, a weekly news magazine ran the cover story, "When Killers Come to Class," which highlighted trends of violence in American schools in the 1990's, the fear of parents and teachers, and revealed that 3 million crimes a year are committed in or near the 85,000 U.S. schools (U.S.News and World report, November 1993). Dan Rather reported, on the December 16, 1993 edition of the CBS Evening News, that many teachers are being victimized by school-related crime even though

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more teachers feel safe at their schools. From this information, it is clear that teachers would definitely be concerned about their safety on the job.

Chicago public elementary school students and teachers have reported many instances of student directed violence on school grounds according to the "Chicago Union Teacher" (February, 1991). School employees have been attacked by individuals either on the outside, as the they enter the school, or by someone hiding inside the school waiting for a victim. These incidents include, but are not limited to:

1.) Robbery at gunpoint in the school parking lot.
2.) Several thefts of jewelry.
3.) Thefts of purses and articles of clothing.
4.) Automobile theft from the school parking lot.
5.) Muggings and sexual assaults.

At one Northwest Side elementary school, an eight year old girl was shot in her classroom by a fourth grade boy while the teacher and classmates looked on in shock (Casey and Herrmann, 1992). These problems made it necessary for the CTU President Jackie Vaughn to have a representative speak to the superintendent of Chicago Police concerning the matter. At some Chicago public schools, teachers do not wear fur even on the coldest days, neither do they wear jewelry, and some teachers even lock purses and coats in closets and office vaults because the security problems are worse now than in past years (Chicago Union Teacher, 1991). The safety of students and teachers became a major concern after 7 year old Dantrell Davis was shot dead while entering a school located in the Cabrini-Green C.H.A. housing project in Chicago. As a result, several law enforcement agencies including the Secret Service presented plans to make the area and schools safer (Long, 1993).

During this writer's tenure at Sojourner Truth Elementary School, located in Cabrini-Green, there have been numerous incidents of violence and crime directed at school employees. This study, will examine teachers' opinions of safety and security at the school where they teach. The information should be of interest to educators, papers and politicians.

In reviewing the literature, Quarles (1989) stated that the public school is not a safe place anymore. School violence is highest in high crime areas. This poses a threat to the education of children. School violence is greater in large urban areas than in other areas of the city because of the larger gathering of young adolescents at the schools. As a result:

> Increasingly, teachers are afraid to go to work.

Quarles (1989) cited examples of cities where sixty-six percent middle school teachers and fifty-two percent of all city teachers polled had considered quitting due to verbal and physical abuse received from students. Statistics from the National Institute of Education reported 2,400 acts of arson, 13,000 thefts, 24,000 incidents of vandalism, and 42,000 cases of damage to property every month in U.S. public schools, while the PTA has shown that school vandalism costs over 600 million dollars a year (p. 8). At the time of this study, the research showed that twenty-seven percent of all Chicago teachers reported being victimized in robberies.

Quarles' (1989) study abounds with tips and survival guidelines to prevent robbery, rape, theft, assault and other types of victimization a teacher should

guard against. The message throughout this report is that crime can be deterred and prevented in public schools. While the school may or may not be a safe place, the teacher can be safe by being aware and watchful.

According to Dennis Smith (1990) schools have become victims of handgun violence while students and teachers are held hostage in the situation. The reported statistics showed the effects of violence using over 2,500 U.S. newspaper stories specifically dealing with elementary and secondary schools involving handguns in thirty-five states and the District of Columbia from 1986 to 1989. During that period of time, 65 students and six school employees were killed with guns, 201 were wounded, and 242 were held hostage at gunpoint. Smith (1990) noted there are ten causes that contribute to gun violence at schools:

1.) Gang-drug related activity.
2.) Long standing disagreements/grudges.
3.) Cleaning guns.
4.) Fights over material possessions.
5.) Romantic disagreements.
6.) Depression.
7.) Vendetta against society.
8.) Racial.
9.) Name calling.
10.) Vendetta against school employees.

Since almost half a million school children carry a gun to school daily according to Smith it is no wonder that teachers are beginning to feel unsafe at their schools. Finally, as it is clear that America's schools are no longer safe havens for learning, it appears that gun control legislation could also be a solution to the problem of school related violence directed toward students and teachers.

According to Harrington-Lueker (1991), youth today have no value system. Some of the incidents mentioned are:

1.) A nine year old who put poison in his elementary school teacher's tea.
2.) A eleven year old who put poison in his elementary school teacher's cake.
3.) A ten year old who punched a pregnant elementary school teacher in the stomach and threw her against a wall

Harrington-Lueker (1991) stated that children are not only victims of violence that shape American life, they are also sometimes victimizers capable of ruthlessness that surprises professionals. Violence from movies and television are major contributors to the state of affairs America's youth, which is reflected in the schools. More children under the age of fifteen are being charged with crimes such as rape, murder, robbery, and aggravated assault, placing more pressure on the juvenile justice system. Kids believe that it's okay to hit or shoot someone to resolve any difficulty between them. Sometimes they learn this lesson from an abusive home. The problem with this younger generation is that:

> Violence is simply an acceptable activity, and there's no sense of being held accountable. It becomes tough to establish ground rules. Elementary school is where the beginnings of antisocial behavior are first noted (p.25-26).

While the breakdown of the traditional American family is a reason for the discord in American public schools, early intervention by schools in the affairs of troubled youth is suggested as a method to understand and rectify problems such as violence that plagues public school systems. A pilot program in the Chicago public schools trains teachers to divert student aggression into socially

socially acceptable behavior.

Administrators in some states are required to provide information to teachers concerning students with previous records of aggression and assault towards teachers and other students.

Gaustad (1991) summarized trends in school violence from 1970 to 1991 by comparing the study Violent Schools Safe Schools, published in 1978, with statistics in this study. Moles (1978) published an independent study during the period following the Safe Schools Study which showed that overall school related crime had leveled off or declined. But in the year of that study, 91,000 reports of attacks on teachers were filed, not to mention more common verbal threats made to teachers this year. Researchers discovered that in some schools, one third of the teaching staff was verbally or physically threatened by a student each month (Stover, 1988).

> Impersonal violence may result in only a minor physical injury but has a devastating impact upon the victim's life in terms of anxiety and subsequent restrictions and movements (Greenbaum and others, 1981, p. 5).

Gaustad (1991) reported that a California professor at UCLA found teachers had symptoms of stress and fatigue not unlike that of battle experienced combat soldiers.

Significant increases with gun incidents in public schools in California, Florida, and Chicago have been reported from the Center to Prevent Handgun Violence:

> ... Gun incidents in the Chicago Public Schools rose by 50 percent in 1988 and ... hundreds of other school systems have reported similar trends in recent years ... (and) one reason is availability of guns (p. 7)

Now some teachers even carry guns, because the kids do as a fashion statement.

According to Blauvelt (1991) it is essential to have an equal partnership between law enforcement officers and school administrators to reduce school related crime against students and staff. Communication is essential in planning school safety and crime prevention. Two scenarios are illustrated to show the importance of good public relations between police and the school in the implementation of policy when trouble arises. Blauvelt (1991) believed that special training must be given to police assigned to patrol schools in whatever number the officers are assigned. He felt that the presence of the police, or any type of security officials on school grounds to prevent student or teacher directed violence, can be an asset or a liability depending on how school authorities plan their strategy. Areas of discussion in crime prevention planning suggested by Blauvelt (1991) are:

1.) Initial planning meetings between school and police personnel.
2.) Periodic joint reviews of information.
3.) Logistical issues to consider when developing a cooperative relationship.

In conclusion, the author summed up his study by stating that an equal partnership must exist between police and schools.

Another study by Gaustad (1991), found that violence involving teachers and

students hinders the learning process and instills fear in school employees and pupils. In this report, several suggestions are given by the American Association of School Administrators (ASSA) to assess and report systems that deter crime in schools. Controlling and monitoring student movement in hallways, installing alarm systems, and using metal detectors are methods suggested by Gaustad (1991) to control theft, vandalism and assault at school, although according to Harper (1989), metal detectors are expensive and controversial.

Reaching out to potentially violent and aggressive students and teaching them useful and constructive skills is another way to reduce school violence. While schools have an obligation to provide a safe learning environment, administrators, by using preventive measures as metal detectors, still do not protect themselves from the invasion of crime, but they do protect themselves from lawsuits and liability in court (Harper, 1989).

According to sources within the Chicago Board of Education, there is no way to keep a gun out of a school unless you nail all windows and doors closed (Rossi, 1993). However, many schools within the city use metal detectors which cut down on fights, truancy, and unapproved visitors. A problem in using these devices is having the available staff to monitor them and having enough devices to place at all school entrances and exits. The Mayor of Chicago has called for all public high schools to install metal detectors after a fatal shooting at a Chicago public school. An interview of principals at some of the schools where this type of security is used found that:

> Metal detector use in Chicago public schools is a mixed bag. Some schools use them daily, others use them for

> Metal detector use in Chicago public schools is a mixed bag. Some schools use them daily, others use them for random checks each week, and others only screen a portion of the student body (Rossi, 1993, p. 3).

Part of this survey will determine whether or not teachers would feel safer with metal detectors installed at their schools.

According to Maze (1991) there is much violence in public schools directed toward teachers and employees from students that is not reported. The level of concern has been raised on this issue due to recent publicity given by the media to at school violence. Maze cites six reasons for school violence. These are:

1.) Lack of parental control.
2.) Availability of weapons.
3.) Drug activity.
4.) Fear by school staff of retaliation.
5.) Gang involvement.
6.) Lack of ability by police to detain violent juvenile offenders (p. 3).

A major concern now is at what point can schools become liable due to negligence in their duty to provide a safe learning environment for all employees, because of increased violence in public schools. Though the school district is protected through sovereign immunity from lawsuits, it is the legal duty of public school personnel to protect students from harm. Theoretically, it is also the duty of the school district to protect employees from harm. In a successful lawsuit, the plaintiff must prove that the school failed in its legal duty to protect the employee against reasonable risk through failure to conform to a required standard that would have prevented the injury or damage to the plaintiff or their property. The author lists three defenses that will relieve the school

that will relieve the school district of liability. They are:

1.) Contributory negligence.
2.) Assumption of risk.
3.) Sovereign immunity (p. 4-5).

Because legal actions are decided in state courts, each state can interpret immunity differently. Due to victims coming forward in school related violence situations, courts have made significant decisions on victims' rights laws concerning public schools. In the 1985 case, New Jersey v. T.L.O., Justice Powell decided:

> ... the school has an obligation to protect pupils ... and also to protect teachers from violence... (Carrington, 1987, p. 6)

A California state constitutional amendment states:

> All students and staff of public primary, elementary, junior high and senior high schools have the inalienable right to attend campuses which are safe, secure, and peaceful (Carrington, 1987, p. 10).

More victims, including teachers, are now litigating cases against schools. A trend has developed to hold third-party defendants, including schools, responsible for teachers' injuries. Courts have decided:

> Schools will provide an environment harmonious with the purpose of an educational institution ... where there is custody of and an absolute right to control student behavior (Carrington, 1987, p. 14).

In conclusion, Maze (1991) summed up the meaning of his article by implying that if schools are aware of a dangerous presence, the school must take

reasonable steps to prevent students and staff from being injured or risk lawsuits.

According to Rapp (1987), the school has an obligation to make the educational environment safe for teachers and students. Victims of crime on school premises have the right to seek legal aid and school can be held responsible if negligence is proven by the plaintiff. A safe school is defined by Rapp as one where measures are implemented to prevent crime and violence through proaction instead of reaction.

According to Bobbitt (1993), it is questionable whether or not we will reach the sixth education goal of 'America 2000' as mandated by President Bush. Bobbitt (1993) stated:

> In 1990-91, one out of every four public school teachers cited lack of parental involvement as a serious problem in their schools. The problem was also described as 'serious' by 4.3 percent of private school teachers (p. 2).

Though fewer teachers listed gun possession as a serious problem in 1991 than in 1988, apathy, student disrespect for teachers, poverty, and parental alcohol and drug abuse were mentioned as some of the top ten problems facing elementary schools. No one would disagree that these are the key problems that lead to perpetuation of violence and crime by an individual exposed to that type of environment too long. Babbitt (1993) obtained her information from the School and Staffing Survey, reported to the National Center for Education Statistics. Teachers and administrators were asked questions about a range

of problems they could indicate as being serious, moderate, minor, or not a problem at all. She found that teachers and principals viewed parental apathy as the main problem in their schools for the 1990-91 semester. Most teachers experience more problematic behavior with students at the secondary rather than the elementary level, according to her findings. Apathy of parents can lead to other types of discipline problems and even violence which may be directed at teachers by students.

Bob Etheridge (1990) in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction published an article designed to improve school building security as a deterrent to crime in public schools. The cautionary rules listed in the report are:

1.) Have school parking lot foot patrols using one or two individuals on a school security detail.
2.) Be alert of strangers/visitors. Issue visitor passes.
3.) All doors may be used as exits but only one main entrance should exist. Doors should never be chained or pad locked, in case of fire.
4.) Doorway niches should be blocked off in existing buildings. Niches where a person could hide should not be designed for future structures.
5.) Anchor pads should be used to lock down audio-visual equipment and computers. These items should be marked or etched with serial and identification numbers to be recorded on school inventory.
6.) Metal detectors and weapon screening devices should be employed in extreme cases to preclude guns and such items from being brought into a school.
7.) While no security system is 100 percent reliable, schools should use some type of electronic security device to deter criminal trespass during the hours the school is secured at night (p. 10).

While these measures all help reduce school related crime in and around the school, the article is careful to mention the fact that nothing is as important

as communication between schools, parents, and community law enforcement officials. Administration must take more preventive measures rather than merely reacting to solve the problems of school security. The lack of such measures sometimes result in adverse teacher/student relations. This study will examine teachers' feelings on the safety of the outside and inside of their school.

In George's (1990) article, gang activity is cited as a main cause of school violence directed toward students and teachers. Identifying gangs is a remedy for solving many school related violent crimes. Adequate security and supervision can curtail violent activity on school grounds against school employees and pupils. The author noted:

> With frightening frequency, young people are killing their peers in and around schools. Any administrator who has experienced a homicide knows the effect it has on the school staff members and community. It has become a daily battle to make schools safe places for students and staff members (p. 2).

George (1990), ends her study by saying that the school should be in control of events and not be controlled by them

In order for schools to operate safely, hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent every year to maintain security staff, metal detectors, and other crime preventing measures to ensure the safety of teachers and students in U.S. public schools. The expense to school boards to compensate for theft and vandalism of school property costs taxpayers millions in funds that could

be used for education. Violence in public schools has caused some teachers to fear students, stalling the learning process. If it is found that safety and security at public schools is an issue that teachers and researchers agree on, then lawmakers at all levels of government can be compelled to call for more effective measures to control the spread of crime within these schools. The purpose of this study is to examine teachers perceptions of the safety and security climate in Chicago public schools at Cabrini-Green.

Procedures

The questionnaire entitled "Teachers' Safety and Security Perception in the Chicago Public Schools at Cabrini-Green" was the self-made instrument used to measure teachers' opinions of the safety and security climate at their schools. The questionnaire was referred to as the TSSP.

The questionnaire was given to teachers in Cabrini-Green which is a Chicago Housing Authority project community included within Chicago public school district #2. The teachers are employees at the Sojourner Truth elementary school with a population of about 600 students. There are a total of about forty teachers at the school. Female teachers make up the overwhelming majority of the teaching staff (91%), and the majority of teachers are age forty and over (58%). There are nine teachers between the ages of 30 and 39 (25%), and six teachers between the ages of 20 and 29 (16%). The majority of teachers have over twenty-one years of teaching experience (39%). Twenty-eight percent of teachers in this study taught 1 to 5 years, fourteen percent taught 6 to

10 years, fourteen percent taught 16 to 20 years, and five percent taught 11 to 15 years.

This study includes the available sample of forty classroom and/or specialists teachers. Thirty-seven usable returns were received from the teachers, which represents ninety-three percent of the population.

The results of the questionnaire were then tabulated, the percentages yes, no, low, average and high were analyzed to determine the opinion of teachers toward the school security and safety climate in Chicago public schools at Cabrini-Green. The Chi Square was used to determine the statistical significance (.05) of the responses.

Findings

The data in the table show that the majority of the teachers agree with the current trends and ideas found in the research concerning crime prevention and statistics on violence at public schools. In the section concerning the school security climate, a significant majority of teachers said yes to items one through four, agreeing that the school is safe for teachers, students and vehicles. While most teachers answered yes to items six, nine, and twelve, the majority was not significant. Though most teachers answered no to items eleven, thirteen, and fourteen, the majority was not significant. A significant majority of teachers indicated that the school had an average level of security as opposed to low or high. It should be noted that ninety-four percent of

teachers in the population work at schools with a full time security staff. Perhaps this is why some teachers responded yes to item eight, even though the majority indicated they would feel no safer with metal detectors at their schools.

On the seventeen questions dealing with general security concerns, ninety-four percent of the teachers indicated knowledge of a co-worker who has been a theft victim (item #24). A significant majority indicated knowledge of verbal abuse by a student or parent to a teacher in items 19 and 21. On item sixteen, most teachers said they knew a co-worker who has been the victim of a crime at school, but not a significant majority. A significant majority of teachers answered no to all other questions in this section, dealing with knowledge of co-workers being crime victims at school, except on items 18, 21, and 23 where the majority was not significant. One hundred percent of all teachers answered no to items 25, 30, and 32 dealing with assault with a weapon and sexual harassment.

The final section of the survey was concerned with how teachers have been personally effected by violence at their schools. One hundred percent of teachers answered no on items 40, 43, 45, 46, and 48 dealing with assault with a weapon by a student or parent and sexual assault. A significant majority of teachers did not indicate having been victims of vandalism, verbal abuse, assault by a student without a weapon, or sexual harassment. While most teachers answered no to item 42 concerning theft, the majority was not significant. This information substantiates research suggesting that more crimes take place in schools than are reported by teachers to administrators or police. While many teachers indicated safe working environments at their schools, the numbers

schools, the numbers were not significant enough to disagree with the research.

TABLE I
RESPONSES TO THE TSSP
Y. YES N. NO L. LOW A. MODERATE H. HIGH

N = 36

Y	N	School Security Climate
34	2	1.) Do you feel safe in the school where you work?
*94%	6%	
23	13	2.) Do you feel safe on the grounds where your school
64%	36%	is located?
32	4	3.) Do you feel students are safe at your school?
*89%	11%	
26	10	4.) Do you think students feel safe on the grounds
*72%	28%	your school is located on?
34	2	5.) Is there a security staff at your school?
*94	6%	
21	15	6.) Has the security staff at your school increased
58%	42%	in the last five years?
2	34	7.) Are metal detectors in use at your school?
6%	*94%	
17	19	8.) What is your feeling on the use of metal detectors
47%	53%	in elementary school?
19	17	9.) Would you feel safer with metal detectors at your
53%	47%	school?
25	11	10.) Do you feel your car is safe in the school parking
*69%	31%	lot?
16	20	11.) Has your school been the target of a robbery within
44%	56%	the last year?
20	16	12.) Do you think there is any type of street gang
56%	44%	activity at your school?
10	26	13.) Do you think there is any type of illegal drug
28%	*72%	activity at your school?

6	30	14.) Have you seen students with beepers at your school?
17%	*83%	

L	A	H	
4	23	10	15.) Is the level of safety at your
11%	*61%	28%	school low, average, or high?

General Security Concerns

20	16	16.) Do you know a teacher who has been the victim
56%	44%	of a crime on school grounds?
15	21	17.) Do you know a teacher who has broken up a serious
42%	58%	fight in their classroom at your school?
6	30	18.) Do you know a teacher who has broken up a serious
17%	*83%	fight on school grounds?
23	13	19.) Do you know a teacher who has been verbally abused
64%	36%	by a student at your school?
13	23	20.) Do you know a teacher who has been physically
36%	64%	threatened by a student at your school?
26	10	21.) Do you know a teacher who has been verbally abused
*72%	28%	by a parent at your school?
15	21	22.) Do you know a teacher who has been physically
42%	58%	threatened by a parent at your school?
16	20	23.) Do you know a teacher who has been the target
44%	56%	of vandalism at your school?
34	2	24.) Do you know a teacher who has had personal property
94%	6%	stolen at your school?
0	36	25.) Do you know a teacher who has been threatened
0%	*100%	by a student with a weapon at your school?
2	34	26.) Do you know a teacher who has been threatened
6%	*94%	by a parent with a weapon at your school?
8	28	27.) Do you know a teacher who has been the target
22%	*78%	of sexual harassment at your school?
5	31	28.) Do you know a teacher who has been physically
14%	*86%	assaulted by a student at your school?
3	33	29.) Do you know a teacher who has been physically
8%	*92%	assaulted by a parent at your school?

0	36	30.) Do you know a teacher who has been assaulted by
0%	*100%	a student with a weapon at your school?
1	35	31.) Do you know a teacher who has been assaulted by
3%	*97%	a parent with a weapon at your school?
0	36	32.) Do you know a teacher who has been the victim
0%	*100%	of a sexual assault at your school?

Teacher Security Concerns

19	17	33.) Have you been the victim of a crime on school
53%	47%	grounds?
23	13	34.) Have you ever broken up a serious fight in your
64%	36%	classroom?
15	21	35.) Have you ever broken up a serious fight on school
42%	58%	grounds?
16	20	36.) Have you ever been verbally abused by a student
44%	56%	at your school?
8	28	37.) Have you ever been physically threatened by a
22%	*78%	student at your school?
9	27	38.) Have you ever been verbally abused by a parent
25%	*75%	at your school?
0	36	39.) Have you ever been physically threatened by a
0%	*100%	parent at your school?
8	28	40) Have you ever seen or witnessed vandalism at your
22%	*78%	school?
6	30	41.) Have you ever been the target of vandalism at
17%	*83%	your school?
14	22	42.) Has personal property(i.e. car, purse)ever been
39%	61%	stolen from you on school grounds?
0	36	43.) Has a student ever threatened you with a weapon
0%	*100%	at your school?
0	36	44.) Has a parent ever threatened you with a weapon
0%	*100%	at your school?
1	35	45.) Have you ever been physically assaulted by a student
3%	*97%	at your school?
0	36	46.) Have you ever been physically assaulted by a parent
0%	*100%	at your school?

1	35	47.) Have you ever been the target of sexual harassment
3%	*97%	at your school?
0	36	48.) Have you ever been the victim of a sexual assault
0%	*100%	at your school?

*Significance at the .05 level.

In summary, while a significant majority of teachers feel safe at their school (94%), fifty-three percent have been the victims of crime at school and fifty-eight percent have indicated that school security has increased in the last 5 years. This writer feels that more teachers have been the victims of school-related violence but declined to admit it in this survey. Since the majority of teachers have been victims of school-related crime, more dialogue should take place with law enforcement officials and school administrators to help make public schools safer. School safety and security must be priority on the agenda of city, state, and federal lawmakers when planning the future of public education in regards to teachers, staff, and students.